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The Green New Deal Must be Centered on African American and Indigenous Workers to Differentiate Itself From the Democratic Party: Part Two

This is the second of a three part series regarding the Green New Deal. I will argue in the course of this series the method by which the Green Party should articulate a Green New Deal proposal that is radically different and distinct from that proposed by the Democratic Party, even its Progressive Caucus. Green voters and activists nationwide are encouraged to engage with GreenPartyPower.com to connect with activists and organizers emphasizing integrity, intersectional feminist eco-socialism, anti-imperialism, and independence from the Democratic Party. I make no claim that these views are representative of anyone but myself and welcome a vigorous but principled debate around alternative principles and methods of articulation. For one such alternative articulation, listen to this recent episode of [Clearing the Fog](#) podcast featuring an interview with Howie Hawkins. On Thursday, January 17 at 8 pm EST there will be a National Conference Call featuring Hawkins elaborating on the Green New Deal. You can register at [here](#).

Legislators in Washington are currently proposing a Democratic Green New Deal (hereafter DGND) project that continues to implement neoliberal policy, including anti-union measures and fiscal benefits for the 1%. (cf. Corporations See a Different Kind of “Green” in Ocasio-Cortez’s “Green New Deal” by Whitney Webb, 12/18/18, Mint Press News) This would most likely include either quasi-privatization of infrastructure, known in popular press discourse as public-private partnerships, or outright privatization, passed off in public relations as a fair exchange of infrastructure ownership for installation and

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maintenance of renewable energy implements and devices, such as solar panels or windmills.

It also appears that the DGND includes within its framework further weakening of labor union and worker protections. Whitney Webb writes “Another indication that there is nothing ‘progressive’ about the Ocasio-Cortez-backed plan is the fact that it is stocked with neoliberal buzzwords that are catnip to modern-day American robber-barons. For instance, the plan states that it must ‘include additional measures such as basic income programs, universal health care programs and any others as the select committee may deem appropriate to promote economic security, labor market flexibility and entrepreneurship...’ [emphasis added] The term ‘labor market flexibility’ is a neoliberal buzzword that disguises a corporation’s ability to hire and fire at will as an exercise in ‘flexibility’ as opposed to an exercise of corporate power. As Investopedia notes, ‘A flexible labor market is one where firms are under fewer regulations regarding the labor force and can, therefore, set wages, fire employees at will and change their work hours.’”

This is another opening for the Green Party to take advantage of. Right now, the pseudo-alternative press outlets that function as auxiliaries and free public relations agents of the Democratic Party’s Progressive caucus, from Vox to Jacobin Magazine to The Nation, are promoting a multi-media meta-narrative that articulates an argument for a Popular Front with the Democratic Party to oust Donald Trump in 2020.

While there certainly are undeniable and painful aspects to the Trump administration that have fascistic features, one element missing from all of these social democratic venues and reporters/analysts is a true socio-political diagnosis of fascism as a symptom and outgrowth of austerity policies. This is probably because austerity has been most successfully and brutally promoted in the past decade by the political candidates these social democratic venues have regularly and unfailingly endorsed. The Democrats willfully enable the growth of fascist political trends with financial policies that incubate white nationalism within the public over an immiseration that has a very real material basis. This immiseration is borne out in metrics regarding suicides, birth rates, substance abuse rates (most notably being the opioid epidemic), and the precarity of finances that demonstrate many are living paycheck-to-paycheck and are one major accident away from bankruptcy. While this loss of quality of life does not mean that so-called whites are in any way close to facing the kinds of struggles that African Americans and Indigenous people deal with, it does demonstrate that the ‘wages of whiteness,’ as W.E.B. Du Bois explained white privilege, are coming up short and no longer delivering in the fashion they once did.

As such, Greens can argue their form of the Green New Deal is intended to present the preliminary coordinates for a program of reparations and restorative justice while actively and constructively opposing the turn towards chauvinism with meaningful employment. I would here emphasize the point first raised by Du Bois and later articulated by projects like the Combahee River Collective, “If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression,” and later Partrisse Cullors of #BlackLivesMatter as “If Black people get free, everybody else gets free.” In other words, a symptom of reparations and restorative justice for Blacks and Indigenous is an end to the material hardship of not just those two groups but also other nationalities and so-called whites.

As a contrasting example, I would point to the self-destructive 1968 New York City teachers union strike, led by Albert Shanker and abetted by many longtime Socialist Party members, including Michael Harrington, A. Phillip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Tom Kahn, and Max Shachtman. Stanley Aronowitz writes in The Death and Life of American Labor: One of Shanker’s major actions as local president had been to call teachers out on strike in 1968 to oppose three community-controlled school boards, in Harlem, Bedford Stuyvesant, and the Lower East Side, that had attempted to exercise jurisdiction over the assignment of teachers. Shanker and his colleagues preferred to deal with the central Board of Education rather than with the black and Latino leaders of these newly created local boards. The union succeeded in crippling community control over education for the next forty-five years.

Shanker and his Socialist comrades caused the controlled demolition of Gotham’s historic Black-Jewish alliance. In that episode, white supremacy made a short-term and long-term impact. In the short-term, it further polarized the relationship between faculty and student body, fomenting antagonism between the two. In the long-term, it provided American capital the opening necessary to begin the implementation of neoliberal education reform policies, something that will ultimately be the ruin of the public school teaching profession, a unionized career that is predominantly composed of white membership. The ultimate lesson of the 1968 teachers strike is that white supremacy is not just harmful to people of color, it ultimately proves to be harmful poison to the well-being of those who perpetrate white supremacy and maintain its social standing. Or, to borrow wording from Aimé Césaire classic polemic Discourse on Colonialism, “colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to

awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism.”

Eco-socialism and the Green New Deal with an intersectional anti-imperialist framework have the capacity and ability to articulate that our efforts are to increase the material well-being of absolutely everyone and not to socialize poverty by reducing the material well-being of some to benefit others.

The DGND, by contrast, in fact does seek to socialize poverty by utilizing progressive slogans to promote more neoliberal austerity.

The Green Party seeks in this effort to de-commodify and entirely eliminate the market that exists for renewable energy by making it part of the public commons. Projects like cooperative electricity systems that were created in the southeast during the first New Deal provide a template for such projects, as do contemporary public wireless internet networks in government buildings like libraries. In the latter instance, public library wi-fi is integrated into the wider operational structure and budget of the facilities, meaning users can log on for no cost and with no obligations besides basic user agreements. The model of currently existing wi-fi held in the commons is a wonderful example for a Green New Deal to follow for rolling out renewable energy infrastructural improvements.